

better than prozac, it's...

CHAIRSHOTS

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SOMEBODY STOP THE MADNESS! NOW!

J. HIRCHCOCK '93



SHOOTKICK

by Jeff Bowdren

So I'm up one night and its about 1:00AM (another exciting nite at Casa de Bowdren). I've walked Misty the Wonder Dog and I'm trying to decide if I should go to sleep like any normal person would, or watch the last match on my latest Japanese tape. Well, suffice to say if I had gone to sleep, this article would be more boring than oh, say Dave Flaherty's sex life. OUCH!! Anyhoo, I stayed up and watched an 8-woman tag match featuring All-Japan's Aja Kong, Sake Hasegawa, Kyoko & Takako Inoue vs. J.W.P.'s Dynamite Kansai, Mayumi Ozaki, Cutie Suzuki & Hikari Fukuoka. The stipulations were slightly similar to a War Games, except without the cage. It was 3 of 5 falls and each of the girls wrestled a 5 minute singles match until the 20 minute mark when it became an 8-woman tag. Excuse me Mr. Teal, but it was un-fuckin-believable!! The 60 minute match went 59:55 and, coinciding with Meltzer's recent commentary, was brutal. Kyoko Inoue appeared to have been opened up the hard way by Kansai's kicks and Ozaki's eye was horribly swollen by Aja's punches. Take my word for it: Pack a lunch, pop the tape in and enjoy what may well have been 1993's best match.

I finally got around to catching up on the last 8 weeks of Smokey Mountain. Some observations on the plus side: The whole angle with Tracey Smothers, Brian Lee, Dirty White Boy, Tammy Fytch and Ron Wright has been very well done and has a certain believability to it....Chris Candito is a very effective middle of the card heel and is very similar to Scotty the Body in Portland a few years back....Based on the interviews I've seen, Darryl Van Horn appears to have a lot of potential. I loved the reference to his harem of porn stars. My big man B.T. will be starting his fan club real soon at that rate....Ricky & Robert have a very tired gimmick, but can always be counted on for a solid match. And hey! Yo Robert! Give birth to that fetus you've been carrying in your gut for the last couple of years and get your ass back into shape! Ricky should've looked into a lawsuit for non-support or something....Guilty pleasure- at this point I'd rather listen to Bob Caudle call a match anyday over Jim Ross. Bob approaches the television show as if things were totally on the up & up, becomes suitably outraged when necessary and is basically a perfect straight man and fall guy for Dutch Mantell. In other words, everything Jim Ross used to be before he became Mr. Smarmy, Mr. Sanctimonious and Mr. King of Comedy. Hey Jim, remember a classic Jimmy Hart line: "25,000 comedians out of work and we got you"....Brian Lee is like 10 jillion times better as a heel. He's even lost that embarrassing stammer he used to have on his face interviews.... Jimmy and the Bodies are of course, tremendous fun and the two shows where Jimmy was "the commissioner" may have been the best two weeks of wrestling in the U.S. this year.....

Minus side: Bob Armstrong's return as the Bullet happened too quick. I think it would have been much more effective to have Bob disappear for a month or so, with Jimmy & the Bodies constantly bringing it up and finally then Bob reappears under a mask. An immediate return like that, even for a babyface, totally cheapens and ruins the credibility of the loser leaves town match.... Tim Horner should win just about every award for most boring babyface. I got nothing against the guys work, he just bores me to tears as a face. Outside of that booming metropolis of Morristown, Tennessee, does anyone give a rat's ass about Tim Horner? I think not. Which is why I would love to see him turn heel, maybe as Brian Lee's partner in a feud with Smother's and Dirty White Boy....

THE COMMEMORATIVE BRUCE MITCHELL NAME DROPPING'S SECTION: I know he would appreciate it in the spirit in which its intended....GOOD NEWS! After what seemed to be a gestation period of some 8 years, CHAIRSHOTS celebrity-mother-in-waiting Lizette Lopez is....no longer waiting! She is the proud mother of Marissa Victoria, 8lbs 13 oz (HOLY SHIT!). However, I do want it noted that she basically took the cowards way out by getting a C-section.... Until next time, Hey Tramel! Now the real fun begins....SUCKER!!.....

ARENA RAMBLINGS

BY
RON
LEMIEUX

Most of you probably have heard the big news that came out over the weekend as Jerry Lawler was indicted by a grand jury in Louisville on Friday. He was charged with two counts of sodomy, two counts of statutory rape, and one count of threatening a witness. The victim was a 13 year old girl. Arraignment was skedded for Monday (today as I type this). Lawler could face a maximum 41 years in prison. Lawler was on WMC-TV5 on Saturday denying the charges. Lawler's status in the WWF has been put on hiatus although I don't see him ever returning. Shawn Michaels will take his place in the Survivor Series which McMahon and Heenan acknowledged on Monday Night Raw. Surprising that Vince said Lawler wouldn't be there due to legal problems. Can you imagine the headache Vince got when he heard the news? He's got enough legal problems of his own, he didn't need another p.r. problem. Lawler not taking part in Survivors really takes the steam off that matchup. It'll still be a good bout with Shawn but the reason for it is deluded. Lawler being history may also put an upcoming planned feud between Bret and Owen Hart on hold. They taped some stuff at TV last week that had Lawler instigate between the two of them which starts on the Survivor Series Showdown this coming weekend where Owen makes the save for Bret who doesn't appreciate it. This may now be edited. The announcer Heenan and Vince were talking about, Ric Rogers is Bruce Pritchard doing a cowboy gimmick (wonder if it's a shot at Dusty). He'll take Lawler's place on Superstars. The WCW troupe has been down in Orlando the last 4 days taping World Wide at Disney. This item was the talk of the boys the last couple of days. Interesting that a former close associate of Lawler's claimed he knew of Jerry's infatuation of teenage girls. Funny thing is, two sources over the weekend told me he could be up for the same charges someday.

Now we move to the other most talked about incident in wrestling and the unanswered question. What will become of Sid Vicious and Arn Anderson? Well, it depends who you talk to. Most of the boys this week had no clue what was going to happen. It really depended on who you talked to. One prominent WCW wrestler said that Sid's lawyers were trying to block his dismissal by saying it was WCW's fault for having beer on the bus which caused Sid to get overly intoxicated. Boy, I wonder who was funneling the stuff down his throat. My guess is if WCW shows the ending of the tag match next week where Sid makes the save with his ribs wrapped then he's staying. If they don't air it, he's gone.....Gary Michael Cappetta told one source that his room was across from Arn's in England and it was the most terrifying thing he'd seen. After Sid and Arn went to the hospital most wrestlers felt this was the last straw and they would be sent home and the company would be history. My feeling after hearing different stories over the weekend is as long as Ted Turner owns TBS, WCW will always be.

As I mentioned earlier, WCW was down taping World Wide through February 19. Here is what came out of the tapings: Starcade will be Vader vs. Flair and if Ric loses he retires. So we either have a screw job (what a surprise' that would be) or Flair wins it. Also Bulldog-Rude, Nasty Boys vs. Sting & Hawk. I smell a Hawk turn. Personally I'd turn Sting because no one will buy another Sting push. But I was told Sting would never agree to it. Pardon me Mr. Prima Donna. Regal vs. Steamboat, Austin-Rhodes 2 out of 3, Orndorff & Roma vs. Bagwell & Scorpio, and Shlooxkmaster vs. Awesome Kong..... Cactus Jack and Maxx Payne formed a team and will likely dethrone Nasties down the line.....Kendall Windham did a job in a tag squash.....On the Xmas day show Flair beats King Kong and then does one of his best interviews talking about Starcade which would be that Monday.....Thunder and Lightning had to retake an interview again. I cringe everytime these guys step to the mic.... Regal and the Nasties still had the belts in shows taped after Starcade. Neither Flair or Vader wore the title to the ring after Starcade so WCW won't show their hand this time or the title is being held up as the main event at SuperBrawl will be Flair-Vader in a cage. Also on that show will be a six man with Austin, Rude, & Orndorff vs. Dustin, Sting, & Pillman. Regal vs. Bulldog.....Vader beat Ice Train to win the Jesse the Body arm wrestling contest.....The only real angle that took place in the four days was a team of Johnny B. Badd and Michael Hayes ending against Harlem Heat when Badd went to tag Michael but Hayes clocked him and walked out.....

Other sidebars: Shawn Michaels was originally supposed to show up at Survivors and formally challenge Razor Ramon after Ramon won the WWF wrestler of the year. Not so sure about that anymore....After Survivors Jack Tunney will order there to be only one Doink however we will have a midget named Dink.....I'm going to leave you with a thought to ponder. If only a handful of wrestlers had the heat that Dusty Rhodes had in St. Pete at the Clash, this business wouldn't be in the shape it's in. We may not like him, but he's still the king in Florida. I don't know how it came across on TV but live he almost blew the roof off!!

See ya in 2,

Ron

BUMPS & GRINDS

by Mike Terry

The latest bandwagon the mindless masses seem to have hitched a ride on is the fiction propagated by several newsletter writers and editors that Lex Luger's summertime push was a gargantuan waste of time and money which had little effect. What basis is there for this assertion? Well, look at house show revenues, TV ratings, PPV buy rates--they're generally trending downward. We're certainly not seeing any records set, definitely not Hoganesque-type records, and that's what we're really judging success by, is it not? So Lex Luger has failed. You maintain he can't draw flies, he has no charisma, he's conceited, he can't carry the WWF on his now pimple-free back, etc., etc. He's a stiff! If that's the way you think, what you're doing is blaming Luger for the state of the wrestling business in 1993. Sorry, but I don't think that's fair.

I don't think any individual on either side of the book can turn the business around overnight.

So with all this in mind, what do we do when an event like SummerSlam looms on the horizon? Do we give up? Bring Hogan back again or maybe the Uuuuhhhlltimate Warrior? Or do we give it our best shot--and folks, that tour of America was a terrific shot, I don't care how you look at it. Yes, that's what we do. We go for it! We rent the bus, we load our best videographers on board, we produce some of the best videos we've ever done, and we do our best. The WWF did their best. And I think their best was pretty doggone good.

You can't evaluate the success of the campaign by media coverage. Mainstream press simply isn't going to cover this type of thing to any large degree in 1993. But in terms of those all-important casual fans who still turn on TV wrestling now and then--the same individuals we're depending on to keep our business afloat, imagine how it looked. Did it get Luger over? Yes. Did it quickly establish a new superstar? Yes. Was SummerSlam respectable? Yes. Given the state of the business these days, I'd consider that a victory.

Don't blame Luger because the matches against Borga aren't drawing. Don't blame Luger because cards loaded from top to bottom with the cream of the crop wrestlers aren't drawing that well. It's the state of the business in 1993, and certainly the WWF is trying to reverse the trends--after all, they do have a little at stake here.

Looking at profit and loss, looking at trends and revenues, I agree--Lex Luger isn't Hulk Hogan. And the WWF of 1993 isn't the WWF of 1985.

The point is, my friends; get off Luger's back. You have to be blind not to see the potential in Lex and I firmly believe that someday the WWF is the organization that will reap the rewards of it--such as those rewards may be in 1993 and beyond.

And while I'm on the bandwagon subject, when are some of you writers and readers finally going to realize that Dustin Rhodes isn't STAYING where he's at today because of his dad? Isn't that a dead issue yet? I still read implications that Dustin is only in the position he's in because of Daddy. Sure, Dusty pushed him at the start, but even if Dusty weren't with WCW these days Dustin would still have his slot. Folks--I have seen the future of wrestling, and it's not Steve Austin--it's Dustin Rhodes.

Jerry Lawler--what do you use for brains? Someone told me that many wrestlers indulge in the "forbidden fruit." I find it reprehensible that this behavior is accepted among the "boys." Same thing I think about an organizational hierarchy which looks the other way while things like this go on. Why do so many wrestlers think they're above the law? Above accountability? How could someone risk everything they have--everything they've worked for--their reputation, their income, their family? Don't they consider the consequences of their actions? Don't they consider their victims? Obviously, not. But they don't need the likes of me to preach at them. I just wonder if--when all is said and done--the pleasure was worth the pain.

I'll leave you with this: we haven't heard much publicly from Ole Anderson lately, but don't come down too hard on the guy for his shots at our newsletters. He was only exercising one of the freedoms we have in America: the freedom to say what you think without thinking.

See you in 2 weeks. Have a great Thanksgiving!

NERVE ENDINGS

BY PETE LEDERBERG

I've had it! I'm totally fed up with many of the writers in the sheets not admitting that they came along during the Rock and Wrestling Connection, and especially not researching and looking up wrestling history before they write. The thing that really burns me on this is that the same people who will scorch the WWF and WCW for ignoring history are guilty of the same thing themselves. The latest bit of this tripe was Mark Madden's column in the October 23 Torch, wherein he described "The destruction of the NWA World Title" (by the way, has anyone else noticed that Mark's new photo makes it look like that he's now emulating Max Pain instead of Ric Flair?). Mark's column wasn't totally ignorant of history, and certainly doesn't come close to the many other blatant ignorances constantly perpetuated by the Torch's seemingly more and more politically correct attitude and staff, but it was the final straw for me (my least favorite ignorant of history Kellerism is calling the inside cradle off the figure four "The Flair Finish". Hey Wade, Terry Funk won the NWA Title from Jack Brisco in December of 1975 that way, and Barry told me that Kininski used it before that.) That's Gene Kininski, not Kelly nor Nick for you Rock and Wrestling connectioners).

Let me explain a phenomenon common to Florida wrestling back in the mid-70's to early 80's: Dusty Rhodes was the biggest name and draw during most of that period. He made a really big deal about winning the NWA title in 1976 since he was the American Dream (and 1976 was the 200th anniversary of this country for you history ingnoramouses out there). He constantly wrestled Terry Funk, and usually won by dq, but never won the title. Do you know what happened? By 1979, when he finally did win the title (from Harley Race), attendance was dwindling for his shots at the title, because even the densest of marks knew that he would get screwed somehow (sound familiar?). (I actually wrote a letter to then NWA president Eddie Graham about this and other issues, like even the local titles never changing in Miami Beach (usually in Tampa) back in 1977) (hey, I really did, but don't blame me for Dusty getting the title, nor accuse me of trying to be Maddenesque and take any credit for it, I'm just reporting here.). Then, they took the belt off of him really quickly. Things picked back up for a short while, but then everyone thought it was a fluke that he won it, so attendance dwindled again. He had the strap put back on him for a longer period the next time, so then it increased his credibility. I'm sure part of the decisions as to whether or not he should have the belt again after that were influenced by the earlier history. If some of you didn't see Dusty during his prime, he had an incredible following (not so amazingly, at the arenas moreso than among the hardcores). Look at the pop he still gets coming out in a Florida arena (91's Superbrawl, last Wednesday's clash) and it will give you a hint of this man's popularity in Florida during the 70's and early 80's. This is not an endorsement of Dusty Rhodes as NWA champion, but hopefully a partial explanation, hopefully you'll learn something.

Believe it or not, in the late 60's-early 70's the Florida programs ran the complete history of the NWA title. More of you would probably know that Norman Kietzer did that quite often also. I remember that most of the hardcores back then (late 70's-early 80's) knew most of that role call, and were up on it. As I stated earlier, it seems that the people yelling the loudest about promotions forgetting about history do the same things themselves in their writing, and that is both hypocritical and unforgiveable. It works a lot better to research your writing beforehand-it's not a sin to be part of the rock and wrestling bandwagon jumpers. Jeff Bowdren does a great job of researching for his articles, particularly his big ones for example. Check out articles by Dave Meltzer when he deals with history for pure excellence in wrestling history (the recent UWFI history he wrote is a great example). Dave certainly was around wrestling before I was, and by no means am I saying he was a Rock and Wrestling wrestling convert (but possibly it's biggest beneficiary!).

Other Torch notes include their constant glee and satisfaction evident in their writing whenever a big crisis hits wrestling-guys if all of the wrestling companies go under you'll have nothing to write about. Also, does anyone else out there have a lot of respect for Lou Thesz as a legend in the business, but wonder how a guy who used the Thesz press (Tommy Rich's finisher in the late 70's-80's- I don't know what he does now, you Rock and wrestling fans fill in who you saw do it) as his finishing "hold" can talk so much about realistic looking wrestling like he used to do? I've seen a few of Lou's older matches, and it looked like they mat wrestled almost the entire match, then he would use that finish out of nowhere for the pin. Sorry Lou, it's a lame finish if you judge it by realistic wrestling standards.

On a side note, it anyone out there has Lil Al Vavasseur's complete photo list, please contact me, as I used to have one, but threw it out in one of my moves, and have come to a point now where I really need a copy. Thanks! Until next time, have fun, and don't forget to think for yourselves!

SMOKY MOUNTAIN HOTSPOTS

BY TIM WHITEHEAD

The 11/8 issue of Wrestling Observer Newsletter contains the ballot list for the 1993 awards vote. Looking over it, one can find few positive categories where the Japanese don't either dominate or at least break even with their American counterparts. One exception to that rule is the category of "Manager of the Year". This is the one category where American wrestling is in a league all its own. Because of the heel vs. babyface nature of the wrestling game in America, interfering managers have been a major component of the sport for decades. True, there are a few managers elsewhere. Mexico has Andy Barrow, who is a sort of vague presence at ringside during The Killer's matches. There are a handful of others, such as diminutive mascot Alushe and the guy who looks like he's on a bad acid trip who hangs out at ringside during some of the female matches. But overall, Lucha Libre action centers on the wrestling itself. Outside interference is rare and the need for managers is thus reduced.

Managers are also a rarity in Japan for similar reasons, though the recent debut of Wally Yamaguchi as "Mr. Toyota" could change that. He's hilarious and he takes terrific bumps. But the real managerial action still takes place on these shores. Specifically, it takes place in Smoky Mountain Wrestling. Okay, I readily admit to having a pro-SMW bias, but what other promotion has a better roster of managers? The WWF? Gimme a break! Except for Bobby Heenan (who is no longer managing) there hasn't been an interesting manager in Titan since the days of Freddie Blassie & The Grand Wizard. Why do you think Boss McMahon had to call Jim Cornette in to take over at ringside for Yokozuna? And WCW? Harley Race was a great wrestler but he bites the big one as a manager. Col. Robert Parker, Missy Hyatt, and others are barely blips on the managerial radar screen. As for USWA, they've got Richard Lee, who is pretty good, and a bunch of bubble gum chewing bimbos like Lauren Davenport. Paul E. Dangerously can be good in the right setting but I haven't seen much out of him in a long time other than interviews where he talks about making wrestling more like MTV with someone like the Burger King guy hanging around to make the show appear "cool".

No doubt about it, SMW is the true Hotspot™ for managers. Jim Cornette remains the greatest manager in the business and an easy vote for Manager of the Year. No one in the business possesses his combination of interview ability, willingness to take bumps, and expertise in working the crowd. Ron Wright is hilarious in his hypochondriac/wheelchair gimmick, even though he's been toned down some in recent months. As difficult as it may be to believe, he'll make a great babyface. Tammy Fytch would be Rookie of the Year if managers were eligible for that category. You have to attend a live SMW show to truly understand just how much the females in this area hate her. Add newcomer Darryl Van Horne to the SMW line-up and this territory blows away any other promotion on earth when it comes to managers.

Managerial talent isn't something you learn. As with anything else, you can pick up ideas here and there, but, like art and music, the natural aptitude has to be there from the beginning. Otherwise, Harley Race, who's been around wrestling his entire adult life, would be one of the greatest managers of all time since he's seen it done enough times. He just doesn't have the right personality, or aptitude for the job. So when you send in your ballots for the upcoming fan polls, you'll find it hard to miss voting for SMW in this category. A clean sweep of the top three spots by Cornette, Tammy, and Wright isn't out of the question. Well, I guess that's enough shilling for now. I wasn't scheduled to write a column in this issue but Barry called me and was desperate so I held him up for \$100,000 just like Sid.

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A KNEE TO THE GROIN!

"1993 -THE WRESTLING YEAR IN REVIEW"

BY GUEST COLUMNIST - CRUSH LIMBAUGH

This is Butch Bigelow speaking. Due to a serious injury, I was not able to meet my deadline for this issue's column so I have asked my cousin, the world renowned conservative wrestling columnist, Crush Limbaugh, to fill in for me. I don't really want to talk about the nature of my accident but my heartless editor, Mr. Barry K. Rose, insists that I explain in detail. The truth is that both of my hands are in walking casts due to an unfortunate mishap involving severe paper cuts (damn centerfolds!) and burns from a malfunctioning.....marital aid. (Boy oh boy, if that Rundle broad laughs when she reads this, I'll have to remind her that she lent me the catalog where I bought the damn piece of junk in the first place!) Anyway, I hope you all enjoy Crush Limbaugh's column. It's a helluva lot better than anything I could slap together. See you all in two weeks.

ITEM: In a typically tasteless attempt to exploit the senseless tragedy in Waco, TX earlier this year, the diabolical Vince McMahon changed Steve Lombardi's gimmick yet again; this time to that of a deranged S&M cult leader/TV evangelist called "The Reverend Lash DaVidiot." It was actually the brainchild of head booker, Pat Patterson, who received divine inspiration from a recent dream involving the afterlife. Patterson claims to have awakened in a swoon, screaming "Oh sweet Jesus please take me now! Oh god, I'm coming!" When asked for a comment, Lombardi said only "Well...it's still better than Doink III!"

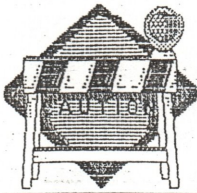
ITEM: In a situation running parallel with President Hillary Clinton's decision allowing women in the front lines of military combat, the WCW booking committee scheduled a series of title matches between Big Van Vader and Missy Hyatt. Upon receiving her booking sheet, Hyatt immediately lapsed into one of her legendary temper tantrums - kicking, biting, hissing, screaming, shrieking, whining and pouting that it wasn't fair and that she was being discriminated against just because she was a woman. An unruffled Dusty Rhodes held his ground by countering "Dat's wimmen's lib fo yuh, baybuh! Yuh kin tank dat Ms. Prezden Hillaruh fo yo new job! Yuh bess kip yo prittuh yap shut oh ess yuh mat git drafted, too! Dem Haitians ovuh dey in Haishia wud jez luv ta haba fine, fine laduh like yooseff in wunah doze hoodoo-voodoo prism camps! Dis iz duh Mekin Dweam tawkin atchu, honuh chile!"

ITEM: An infuriated Mark Madden, recently fired from the Torch, made the following statement to the wrestling press (which had nothing at all to do with his own Bill Watts related grandstanding, attention seeking antics.) "If it hadn't been for that opportunistic, rabble rousing Crush Limbaugh exposing me as a bedwetting crossdresser who hates Eskimos, Wade Keller never would have fired me! What right does Limbaugh have to stick his nose into my business and make me lose my job? He's just supposed to report the facts, not create controversy! Where would he ever get the stupid idea to cross that line of responsible, unbiased journalism into the realm of personal vendettas and meddling? Sure, I know I'm not much more than a crummy hack writer with a chip on my shoulder but I thought I was doing pretty well considering how disorganized the Torch was when I was hired. I just needed a little more time to get my act together but now I'll never get the chance. Now everybody who used to rave about me is saying **Good Riddance to Bad Rubbish! We never liked him, anyway!** People can be such hypocrites!"

ITEM: Jim Ross Perot, that megalomaniacal broadcaster, continues to go ballistic in his tirades against Lucha Libre, maintaining that the proliferation of Mexican-style wrestling in the US will cause thousands of well paid, hard working American wrestlers to lose their jobs. "Just look at what happened when we allowed Canadian wrestlers into the country! Before we knew it, Bret Hart was the champion! Now the Mexican promotions such as AAA and IWC are sneaking over our borders like so many killer bees and are outselling our own fine, all-American WWF in California. I think that's just sad!" In order to prove that he is not just blowing smoke, J. Ross Perot recently issued a challenge to wrestle either Konnan or Mil Mascaras in a "Loser Leaves the Country" match to settle this situation once and for all. So far, there have been no takers.

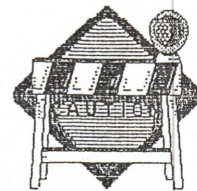
ITEM: Jane Fonda, although never officially on the company payroll, had been assigned by her husband, Ted Turner, to completely revamp the admittedly loophole riddled WCW drug testing policy. Her pushy, bitchy, hard nosed approach has triggered much resentment among the rank and file. "Who does she think she is, anyway? The bloody queen?" griped an overtly muscled, cornrowed wrestler of British origin who asked to remain anonymous. "Blimey, it's not like she was actually hired for the position or something! She's only there because she's married to the boss!" The details of her well intentioned albeit ill conceived plan remain vague and hazy but several inter-office memos have been leaked to the wrestling press by disgruntled employees. Apparently, in accordance with her longtime socialist tendencies, Hanoi Jane has demonstrated very little working knowledge of the nature of drug testing. Her plan is to have all of the wrestlers urinate into a community specimen bottle with a single composite sample being tested. That way, in the true spirit of Chairman Mao's Little Red Book, the guilt and/or innocence of the few can be shared equally by all.

THAT'S ALL YOU LITTLE PEOPLE CARE TO KNOW!



THE FINAL THE RAZOR'S EDGE

By Jimmy Berkley



"There's no territories anymore. There's no feeder markets or farm teams no more. There's no development mode for the young wrestlers anymore." Sound familiar? Maybe you're one of the people who say and believe the above comments we all see bandied about in every sheet. Or, maybe you are scratching your head, squinting your eyes or whatever you do when you seem a tad befuddled. I happen to fall into the latter of the two categories. What my two 30 year old eyeballs are seeing is an oversaturation of feeder markets and training locations these days. Speaking in general now, we all know in the 70's and 80's, there were about 15-20 legitimate real territories you could work in. No need here to name 'em all, I'm pretty sure we all have about the same ones in mind. In those days, most were all acknowledged by the other within the dressing rooms as well as some television comments plus the world titleholder would swing through each of the main houses accordingly. Then, we had what were known as the "outlaw" groups. Small, unorganized shows usually run by an older worker who had a little hey-day in the 60's or very early 70's. However, I dare say there were at the most 10 outlaw groups spread out among the country. Rarely was even a mid-level name ever associated with any of these shows, usually ran in skating rinks or agricultural centers, at all. The names of the towns were totally unknown except to the minimal number of ticket buyers who saw a poster or two in the local Handy store. It was unheard of for "opposition" to run vs. Jim Crockett in the Mid-Atlantic states but every now and then you'd see a quickie show here or there with no name guys on it. Vince, Sr. had the entire northeast wrapped up and the existence of one small promoter, I believe in New Jersey, was just a speck. Verne had a tiny little problem with a mountain man in Indiana and Tennessee promotions, whether Jarrett, Gulas, Welch or Fuller generally had TV, which elevated them from the "outlaw" designation. Texas was pretty set with San Antonio's promotion along with the Von Erich's and Florida's closest rival, Global Wrestling, from about 85, died quickly. California had that Arizona-Marshall Roove connection (never figured that out either) but overall, I think you get the picture. At this point, new talent would train at one of about maybe 5 or 6 wrestling schools in existence at this time, it was totally closed shop, and you really, really, had to know someone to even watch it, much less train inside. Even the sheets were not discussed in the dressing rooms of the main regions for fear of being thought of as a "stooge" to the sheets.

Now, in 1993 you need a calculator to figure up how many different groups are running. Everybody and his brother, sister, step-dad and uncle has a wrestling school. Hell, for anywhere from \$1,500 to \$5,00, any yahoo who's sat second row at The Omni for the last 10 years can sign up at Jethro's School of Wrestling in Marietta and the next thing ya' know: "Well golly, I'm a pro 'rassler mama, we're havin' a show at the Ford dealer Saturday, wanna' come? Don't laugh, all of y'all have seen this type. I know I went a bit heavy on the accent (and I have a southern accent too, southern boy myself, South Carolina born and bred and fuckin' proud of it-just happen to live in Florida now) but you get the picture. The worse thing about it is some decent, known guys in the biz who fell on hard times have pulled this wrestling school shit in the last few years. "Brother, I'm gonna get you booked, don't worry. I've sold the Super Dome out (or the Charlotte Coliseum or the Meadowlands or whatever), I've got the connections." Knowing full well, they ain't gonna get shit but seperated from that hard earned money (or maybe got from Mama i.e. Magna TA paid Buzz Sawyer supposedly almost \$12,000 to teach him, at least Terry made it after his mother second mortgaged her home in Virginia Beach). Anyways, the fact of the matter is that nowadays, the Carolinas have about 5 or 6 outlaw, oops they call 'em independents now, groups, the northeast has about 3 or 4 indies, the mid-west has several thriving, Georgia is loaded down with these small operations and saving the big-daddy of them all, Texas in all of it's glory, home to 843 different wrestling promotions, gimme' a fuckin' break! If this was an infomercial, we would need the "Stop The Insanity" girl.

Actually, I need to give my resident state of Florida a shootkick (sorry Jeff, not trying to steal your thunder) since in the last few years Florida's been home to a ton of half-ass operations, some even with television.

True, we have indeed seen some decent workers evolve from some of these sideshows and make it into the big time (I personally classify that as either WCW or WWF) or making it in the main Japan promotions. Let me just interject that I am in no way looking down at these operations, they are only there because the big two created them and don't even know it (we'll get to that), it's just that there is quite a difference in the two. Yeah, yeah, I know WCW ain't drawing shit, WWF is canceling B shows but the Funkster packed 'em in in Anarillo the other day and ECW and Caraluzzo outdraw Atlanta in Philly, enough already. I'm just saying ask any worker, you've made it when one of those two, WCW or WWF, accepts you into the fold. If you don't understand it, you never will so keep reading. Now, Lightning Kid (now 1-2-3 Kid made it, Eddie Mansfield's IWF produced a few acts that went to both, Global-Texas made Marcus Bagwell, (he's over people, believe me, he and Scorpio are over), Steve Austin came from one of the Texas deals, these are just a few of the talents who have originated from the indies.

Getting to what's causing all this, of course we must apply the blame in this situation. Well, we must segment the blame, to what proportions is not relevant, just the reasons. First off, this parade of "talent" that appears all over rural America became due to the glut of wrestling schools, which smartened up more people faster than people respond to the porno tape want ads in the Observer's Reader's Pages. Why do you think WWF or WCW guys blow off a guy who walks up to him in a hotel lobby and says "Kay fabe, dude". It's a turn off and most are misinformed. Secondly, the '84-88 explosion of wrestling provided a quick dollar opportunity for many with smarts to pull it off due to the general public's then-hunger for anything about pro wrestling. Now, these fragmented, left field promotions continue on into oblivion, passing out free tickets all over town with the hope of more than the workers relatives in the audience. Last but not least, another culprit in these B movie spin off indy groups are none other than WCW and WWF. Yep, you read right. You see, from as far back as I can remember, these two companies would literally slam the door in your face if you didn't have a connection. You could be juiced to the max, great photos and tapes, send it Fed-EX to either office and guess what, the guys now had the next couple hours worth of joke material to rag on. Keep in mind, I'm speaking generally here. Nowadays, the door is open somewhat, they almost come to you sometimes if you have the look. But I'm sure you see my point. Just 'cause you're a great worker doesn't get the job. Sabu is excellent, I love his matches, full of excitement for sure. It's just bizarre since it's been reported he's been offered jobs after both companies' tryouts but turned them down. Hell, why even show up for the interview if you can't take the job. Could you check on that one for us, Wade?

Jimmy

Sucker Punch

BY BARRY ROSE



Jeez, what the hell is going on? Since we saw you last, three MAJOR wrestling stories have made their way into the headlines. The infamous Arn-Sid incident in jolly ole England, Mexican lucha star Oro taking a bump and breaking his neck, and now Jerry "The King" Lawler being indicted on five felony counts, including statutory rape. There are a lot of different stories currently circulating so I'll try to summarize this as clearly as possible. Lawler was indicted by a Jefferson County, Kentucky Grand Jury on Friday, November 12. Lawler faces five felony counts including one count of second degree rape of a thirteen year old and three counts of second degree sodomy. He stands accused of having sex with a thirteen year old Louisville, KY girl during June and July of this year. Lawler will be formally charged with the five counts during his arraignment on Monday, November 22, in Jefferson County Superior Court in Louisville. Lawler and his attorney are expected to enter a plea of not guilty to all charges. To make matters worse for Lawler, the Clark County, Indiana Sheriff's Department is currently conducting an investigation of similar allegations against Lawler in the city of Sellersburg, Indiana. Over twenty people have been questioned thus far during the investigation, with at least four of those being USWA employees. Another wrestler (as yet unnamed) is also the subject of that investigation. Lawler was immediately released by Titan (other sources claim that he has been "suspended without pay" and will be brought back at some point pending the fact that he is cleared of all charges) and all references to him were deleted off of television. Jim Ross on Radio WWF said that because of the situation of Lawler's current legal problems being splashed all over the newspapers was the reason for pulling him from the Survivor Series and all WWF telecasts. Monday Night Raw mentioned at the beginning of their show that because of "legal problems" Lawler would be replaced by Shawn Michaels. Lawler has been all over the media outlets in the Mid-South area. The story was the lead in on many of Friday and Saturday's newscasts and has also been featured in most of the area's newspapers. Lawler appeared at WMC-TV in Memphis on Saturday and had this to say: "This was a situation where a couple of young wrestling groupies were bragging about some supposed sexual conquest of their's to some friends and it snowballed and was related to from one person to another and my name was dropped in among other names as supposedly having been with these girls." Lawler, appearing on the local wrestling show in Memphis on Saturday Morning, offered this statement: "I've got a lot of family here in this town, and I want you to know that in the next couple of days, you're going to be hearing some stories or seeing some stories on some allegations made about me. And I just want to say right now that each and every one of these are totally false, and I gurantee you that I will prove that, if I have to be, in a court of law. That's all I'm going to say about that". Many of the area fans are mixed in their opinions as to whether Lawler could be guilty of these crimes. Reggie B. Fine told the Memphis Commercial appeal on Saturday that "I don't believe it. He's an all right dude, been around a long time here in Memphis...I don't think he did nothing like that." Lawler is forbidden to wrestle in Louisville, but did wrestle Monday night in Memphis, teaming with his real life son, Brian Christopher. Lawler's ex-wife (some sources claim that they are not yet legally divorced), Paula (who was accompanied by her sister) sat at the announcers table, offering moral support. In a post script to this story, CHAIRSHOTS columnist Pete Lederberg spoke to Lawler Sunday evening. Lawler denied all charges and said that the truth would come out in court. He was also pleased with his interview on WMC-TV. Thanks to JD McKay, Jr. for help with this story.

Latest news on the Arn and Sid deal had WCW hierarchy telling people that there was no official word on their status with the company. In talking to Cody Boyns (of Wrestle Rap radio show in New England) he relayed a story that totally contradicts this report. Gene Okerlund appeared on his radio show November 7 and stated that both Arn and Sid had been officially "terminated". Many within WCW already know that Okerlund's role throughout the company is a lot more than just as an announcer. No doubt, much like the preceding story, more to come on this.

You may have noticed the little caption over Jimmy Berkley's column. I'm sad to say that outside interests (outside of CHAIRSHOTS) will keep Jimmy away from contributing anymore to CS. JB and I are still as close as brothers, and maybe one day we'll see him back in print. Take care, my friend.

And finally this month, our thirty page deal is looking real good. We'll have our next issue published on December 1. Then our thirty pager will arrive around Dec. 15. There won't be a following issue until Jan. 15. To receive the next issue and the thirty page edition you must see at least a 4 in the space underneath your address. If it is less than 4 than its time to get a little moolah out and mail it in to CS central. We've got quite a few surprises lined up for this and I guarantee that this will be required hardcore reading. Talked to John Hitchcock and he said the cover is absolutely tremendous (every cover is, John) and as previously mentioned he'll also be including a piece. Sheldon Goldberg of Mat Marketplace will be dropping in, as well as Klon, Jeff Lynch and many more. Well, that about wraps it up for this issue. See you in two. I'm Looonng gone!!!

CHAIRSHOTS MAILBOX

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CHAIRSHOTS WELCOMES ALL LETTERS, COMMENTS AND
CRITICISMS. ALL LETTERS ARE PRESUMED FOR PUB-
LICATION UNLESS REQUESTED OTHERWISE.

Barry,
In CS's ongoing effort to engage the Torch in a
sheet war, let me be the next to lob an artillery
barage. I subscribed for about two years, and at
first found it to be interesting. However, over
the months I grew more and more irritated with the
style and less interested in the substance. I re-
cently decided to let my subscription lapse and
instead am sending my money to you. Wade seems to
be so impressed with his weekly effort that its a
wonder there is room to report any news with all
of the self promotion. No where in the Observer
will you find Dave Meltzer's name. Wade's name
appears on practically every page (editor/publisher/
photo by). Wouldn't it be simpler to rename the
Torch and call it Wade Keller's Weekly Attempt To
Live Up To His Own Hype? My decision to cancel came
down to this: Which sheet do I read first-Torch or
CS? If you know of anyone looking to buy a two year
collection of pompous, self serving opinion (suit-
able for wrapping fish) I know where there is one-
CHEAP!

GREG VANDENHEUVEL
WEST LORNE, ONT. CANADA

(When those darn Canadian of the year awards are
handed out, this guy needs a serious look at!)

Dear Barry,
Imagine my surprise when I opened up CS 13 and saw
my name in Pete Lederberg's NERVE ENDINGS column.
I went to college in Tennessee (TSU), so I know
what the "climate" is like down there. Yes, I
complain like hell if a black is treated contrary
to any of the politically correct doctrines. But
hey, when are black wrestlers treated like any of
the other wrestlers? When is a black wrestler
treated like a Bret Hart or a Sean Michaels? When
is a black wrestler given that "champion aura"
like Luger, Warrior or Hogan? Correct me if I'm
wrong, but Luger and Ron Simmons both started
about the same time. Were their pushes different?
Were the workers that Lex was put in the ring any
different than Ron's? I think so. Can Luger perform
any better than Simmons? That is debatable. I'm not
knocking Pete's sarcastic comment about me because
I can see where people have likened his view to
Rush Limbaugh. I think if a heel rap character works,
more money to the promoter. If it doesn't develop
right and doesn't get over, than pull it quickly!
I'm not someone who just focuses on racial issues.
A lot of my letters (Wade primarily, Meltzer to a
lesser extent) have been edited. I'm just a black
hardcore who is reminded what I am every single
day, whether overtly or subtly. So, if you see

sometimes I write about the race situation
in my letters it is only a reaction to what
I see in wrestling and what I see in life.
In closing, Ice Train sucks.

ROBERT LEE SOLARI II
DETROIT, MI

(Just for the record, this letter was moder-
ately edited.)

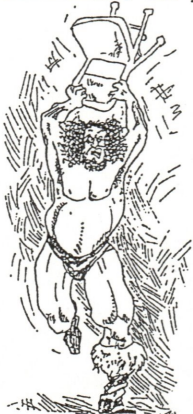
Barry,
I'm a little concerned about the five star
method of grading matches originated by the
Observer. It seems like every match liked by
a fan gets between four and five stars. To me,
three stars is a good match and if I give one
four stars and up then it deserves a look for
match of the year. Kobashi V Williams is the
latest match to pop up in the sheets and I
don't get it. Hansen V Kobashi was much better
and I could name eight other matches this year
that I'd rate over it. The rating system doesn't
work, doesn't tell you anything if you rate
everything you like at four stars, and every-
thing you hate at negative three stars. The only
match that I've seen in my thirty two years as
a fan that made me see five stars was the Toyota/
Yamada V Ozaki/Kansai match from 11-26-92. On a
different note, a lot of people have asked me
about Konnan's letter mentioning my name that
appeared in the Observer. It seems to be an
honor to be the first fan to have his criticisms
answered in a sheet by a wrestler. I thought he
treated me well since I took some cheap shots
at him about his hair. I'm a fan of his and I've
paid money to see him every chance I've gotten.
I wrote about him early in his career and praised
him, but I've been disappointed in the last few
years. Maybe the public rewards wrestlers like
Hogan who never took any chances in the ring with
his body, but the readers of sheets like the
Observer and CS have a tendency to honor those
who have skills and give their all. Konnan can go
either way or maybe even a combo of both because
I believe he has the talent. He'll probably make
money by juicing up, using clotheslines, and
yelling "fuck" over the microphone to guys like
Jake Roberts. I'm sorry. I meant this letter to be
short. You just want short letters in CS that are
hip and funny.

STEVE YOHE
MONTEBELLO, CA

(See, we print letters that aren't hip or funny.)

CHAIRSHOTS

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